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E.O. 12958: N/A

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SUBJECT: SPECIAL MEDIA REACTION: BUSH'S VISIT TO IRAQ

¶1. SUMMARY: A columnist in "Akhbar Al-Arab" implicitly suggests that the withdrawal of British forces from Basra comes in response to Iran's threat to fill the gap of coalition troops' absence. An editorial in "Akhbar Al-Arab" states that the war in Iraq has become an inexplicable and unresolvable war of attrition. An editorial in "Al-Khaleej" considers the timing of President Bush's visit to Iraq, in conjunction with the withdrawal of British troops from Basra, as a message to the world that he does not care if the U.S. is left alone in its occupation of Iraq. An editorial in "Al-Bayan" believes that the timeframe of Bush's visit to Iraq should make people apprehensive, as it signals that Iraq may have reached a new turning point towards an unknown and frightening future. End Summary.

¶2. Op-ed under the headline "Redeployment or withdrawal" by Dr. Omar Abdel Aziz in Abu Dhabi-based Arabic language daily "Akhbar Al-Arab" (circulation 25,000) on 09/05:

"The withdrawal of British troops from Basra is a bad omen. Why? Because everyone knows that Al-Maliki's army and his comrades do not control the situation in Basra, thus a potential dispute among militias is very likely. This is what the Anglo-American war has generated so far. The political and security void caused by war chaos in Iraq will further open doors for internal and regional pressure. A few days ago, Iranian President Ahmedinejad advised the Americans and the British to withdraw from Iraq saying that Iran is ready to fill the vacuum caused by their absence. No [further] comment [is needed]."

¶3. Unsigned editorial under the headline "Withdrawal excuse" in Abu Dhabi-based Arabic language daily "Akhbar Al-Arab" (circulation 25,000) on 09/05:

"Just like the excuses given by the U.S. four years ago prior to its invasion of Iraq, some were logical and many were baseless. Some were strategic and some were tactical. So now the excuses for withdrawal range from assuring that security is good in Iraq and that PM Al-Maliki's government is effective, to claims that the U.S. has defeated terrorism, contained regional risk and laid the foundations for a new democracy in Iraq."

"An American victory in Iraq seems impossible, given political and

military circumstances; likewise, a certain American defeat is also difficult because of the renewable external capabilities that keep flowing into Iraq. Therefore, the situation is "neither victory nor defeat"; more a war of attrition than a war which can be resolved through clear-cut strikes."

¶4. Under the headline "Bush between his two visits", the editorial in Sharjah-based Arabic daily "Al-Khaleej" (circulation 90,000) 09/04 read:

"The timing of President Bush's visit to Iraq yesterday, coinciding with the withdrawal of British troops from Basra, is a message to the world saying that Bush does not care even if everyone leaves him alone in his occupation."

"When Bush talked about reducing troops in Iraq based on Gen. Petraeus recommendations that Bush could maintain security with fewer troops if he (Petraeus) were able to make progress in Anbar, he was twisting the truth. He does not want to appear as a retreating loser in front of the world."

¶5. Under the headline "A suspicious visit", the editorial in Dubai-based Arabic daily "Al-Bayan" (circulation 85,000) 09/05 read:

"Bush's most recent surprising visit to Iraq carries connotations. The timing [should make us apprehensive] as it signals that the Iraqi situation may have entered, or is on the verge of entering, a new turning point towards an unknown and frightening future."

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